

Raising A Trickster

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Raising A Trickster

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Summary

Laufey and Loki don't always get along.

Chapter 1

The various tribe leaders, lawmen, jarls and other important people of the realm only came to the capital once every year. It was when legislation was passed, and Laufey did not consider it too much to ask of his children to behave themselves. And yet, not even a day after they had all been told to act a little older than their age, someone had replaced half of the food in the dining hall with painted snow.

“Loki,” Laufey said irritably when he spotted his youngest. The older children were neither industrious nor talented enough to do something like this and fool over a dozen adults. The artistic talents of the other children combined did not match the youngest.

“It was just a bit of fun,” Loki said, but he backed away quickly. On another day it very well would have been.

“You’re lucky Farbauti begged to keep you or I would have left you in the temple to freeze to death. None of your siblings are this much trouble.”

Loki stilled and looked shocked. “You would have?”

“Help the cooks carry out real food. Now,” Laufey ordered irritably.

To his credit, Loki made no fuss about his punishment. He was too young and too small to have the strength to be much help, but he visibly carried somethings and that would be enough to soothe any complaints.

They normally never brought children along when they hunted, it was a brutal sport, and Laufey was reminded of the wisdom of that tradition when he heard one of the children object.

“No! I want to keep it!” Loki yelled.

“Loki,” Laufey said the name as a warning. Most of the time it was either a warning or a complaint. Rarely did they use it as anything else.

He knew it was too soon. The children were barely old enough to understand the necessity. Farbauti put the knife away and muttered about stubborn children. The flock had left the cub behind. They killed the runts out of mercy, but to a child that always seemed to be mere cruelty. Laufey could see the other children look uncertain a little way back.

“What are you going to do with an animal cub, hm?” Laufey asked.

Loki held the tiny cub protectively. “It’s like me.” He hiccuped and then sobbed. “Don’t kill it.”

“You are not malformed. Look at it. The back legs are shaped wrong, it’ll never walk, let alone run,” Farbauti tried to reason.

Loki shook his head. Stubborn.

“It is not a good life,” Farbauti said. “It will suffer – death is quick this way. It will not live long

even if you feed it.”

Loki reluctantly let go and the cub shuffled away from him, but Loki cried still.

Farbauti grunted irritably, even as he picked the youngest up and made sure he couldn't watch while Laufey killed the cub. He made a mental note to make sure the cooks had vegetables on hand – just in case the runt got fussy about his diet.

“Loki!”

There was a squeak and then the little menace darted out of his hiding place and took off running. For someone so small and thin he sure was fast on his tiny feet. Laufey waved a hand and partly trapped the troublemaker in ice.

“You are going to apologize to your sibling.”

Loki nodded obediently.

One would think that someone small, like Loki, would refrain from angering a sibling twice his size, but none of Laufey's children had much common sense. Yet. There was a fading hope inside him that he could instill some in them.

“And you,” Laufey pointed to the second youngest, who looked too smug, “are going to stop goading him.”

Once they had done what he wanted he took Loki by the hand and led the child with him to the public parts of the palace. Loki was trouble, yes, but he had a good head for politics. A busy child was less likely to cause a riot.

Farbauti was already there, arguing with one of the tribe leaders.

“Behave now,” Laufey told Loki.

Loki nodded dutifully.

It likely said something about his children that Laufey was not in the least surprised to find them running amok. He had trashed his fair share of possessions growing up, but that seemed very distant. Perhaps he should blame Farbauti for that trait.

“Children,” he called out. He was tired, he wanted to rest, and why had he wanted children so badly anyway? Farbauti had been reluctant, but when eventually the pregnancy happened they both had the opinion that perhaps it was just as well.

The two oldest had been carried by Farbauti. Laufey had been hesitant because he had already had a runt before they met, and it appeared he had a knack for getting them. It gnawed at him sometimes, that he had never allowed the first to grow up.

They stopped, and the oldest took the initiative to start picking things up. True to form, the youngest did nothing of the sort.

“Loki...” Laufey pointed to the mess and Loki hung his head, but dutifully went to clean.

Laufey stayed to supervise them. He had no confidence whatsoever in their ability to do a decent job unless he glared while they worked.

Waking up the next morning to find his oldest child being chased by the youngest might be amusing in some ways, but it was also something Laufey did not approve of. He got out of bed and grabbed the little menace with one hand.

Unfortunately Farbauti could – and probably would – sleep through a full scale war. Any parenting done before he woke up on his own would fall on Laufey.

Laufey pinched Loki's ear. “Was that necessary?”

Loki rubbed his ear and scowled.

“Do not cause me more trouble, or that will be the least of your woes.”

“But he -”

“I realize he likely did do something,” Laufey said, “but whatever that was did not wake half the city up.”

“Are you saying I should retaliate *quietly*?”

“I suppose having you lot get along is too much to ask for,” Laufey grumbled. He had in his naivety once pictured obedient and quiet children. Never fussing, or at least easy to soothe.

“Why can't I be an only child?” Loki huffed.

“Helblindi would have been the only child, you and Byleist would not have been born.”

Loki sullenly mumbled something, but Laufey opted to ignore it.

“Are you going to behave at the Grand Meet this year?”

“Fine.”

Loki, covered in bruises and shivering, was brought into the dining hall by one of the jarl's guards. They threw him to the floor.

Laufey stood up and walked over before he had fully realized he was doing it. The guards were talking, but he ignored them. Loki whined in pain when he was lifted up, and Laufey could hear

him breathe in short ragged bursts.

He made a soft shushing noise and made sure he was holding Loki in a way that did not hurt him further. If they thought they would get away with hurting one of his children... they had another thing coming. Normally he would keep Farbauti from killing jarls left and right when they acted up, but this time they met eyes and an understanding was reached. Runt or not, Loki was theirs.

Once a healer had looked Loki over Laufey took him by the hand and made him go with him to the temple.

Loki did not need to see or hear the bloodbath that would ensue.

Chapter 2

Loki's feet were cold. The temple was always too cold for his liking. The Casket chilled everything close to the temple until it was like the harshest of winters.

"I'll be better," he whispered, fearful of what might happen. "I'm sorry, I won't do it again." He rubbed his face and hoped his tears were not noticed.

"You will," Laufey said. "Of that I have no doubt. You always cause trouble of some sort."

"Don't leave me here," he begged. "Please!"

"Why would I?"

"You *said* -" he wanted to yell, but he choked on a sob instead. "You said you should have *left me* here! You said..."

Laufey picked him up and held him, one large hand rubbing his back. Loki tried to think back and find something he had missed. Some sinister memory from when he was younger, but the worst he could recall was a nasty fight he had with one of his siblings.

He had never realized he was unwanted.

"It's tradition. It has always been considered kinder to let a child die if it's too weak to live. People were appalled when we kept you."

"Why did you, if you don't want me?" Loki mumbled. "What did I do?"

"Because I had a runt the first time I gave birth, long before I met Farbauti. You have to stay and watch, and it took the little thing three days to die. It's horribly cruel, and even though I thought I could handle doing such a thing it always comes back to haunt me. I believed in the tradition back then. I thought everyone was right when they said it was best. I didn't want to be the one to leave you here when you were born, and Farbauti outright refused. So we kept you."

"You kept me, but you don't want me." Loki wanted to go back to before he knew, and he wanted to be wrapped in soft furs and sleep between his parents. He wanted to have the illusion back.

"We do want you, we just needed to realize it was a stupid tradition." Laufey held him tighter. "I'm sorry I said that. I don't want you to think you're any less wanted than your siblings. You're a menace, but you're ours, and we love you."

Laufey pointed to a wall. "See the markings? This is the year you were born." Laufey pointed at a scant few marks. "These are the runts left here after." Then he pointed to a large number of marks. "This is since Farbauti and I married. See how many there are?"

Loki nodded shakily. "It stopped?"

"Almost."

"Because of me?"

"Yes. We could show that you were healthy and developing normally." Laufey kissed Loki's wet cheek. "Some still see it as an affront to keep a runt alive, and it was very recently... I should never have said that I would have left you here. *I wouldn't* and I didn't. Will you forgive me for making

you upset?"

Loki nodded. He rubbed his face and wished he could stop crying.

Chapter 3

Farbauti was holding audiences and would be doing so for a good long while yet, by the look of things. Laufey was busy with some diplomat or other.

He felt a small hand close around his wrist.

“You know the rules,” he told Loki sternly. He refused to be here longer than he had to, which meant no disruptions caused by children.

Loki smiled and climbed up to sit sideways on his lap. “No noise, no moving about.” He rested his head on Farbauti’s chest.

Once the little menace was settled Farbauti waved for the next in line to step forward. He was often secretly thankful that Loki was willing to spend time with him even when it was boring. The oldest had to be physically dragged if they wanted him present. Yet here was the little runt, paying attention even though he often appeared asleep.

Hours later when Farbauti made his way to have dinner Loki truly was asleep. The oldest sibling weighed enough that carrying him was bothersome, but Loki was light. Almost like a bird, fragile and easy to break.

He placed Loki in Laufey’s lap while he served himself food.

How Loki could have gotten into his little head that they would have left him at the temple he did not know.

“What did the small ones want?”

Laufey frowned. “Nothing I will allow them.”

“Trouble?”

Laufey made an undecided kind of gesture.

Farbauti shrugged. “Better watch them either way. Nothing good ever came from *them*.” He absently smacked the firstborn for terrorizing the middle child.

“Ow!”

“Behave,” Farbauti ordered, “or I will have you work as a servant until you learn manners.”

“I wish I didn’t have siblings.”

“Mhm, I said that too when I was young, but when you actually do lose them it’s a different story.” Farbauti pointed to the four tattoos on his upper arm. “I did not name you after my brothers because I disliked them as an adult.”

“I don’t know, they were kind of annoying,” Laufey muttered.

Farbauti took Loki from Laufey and slapped him once there was no risk of the youngest being dropped. “Impossible, the lot of you.”

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